

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-11 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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R 260815Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2353

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMCONSUL MEDAN

AMCONSUL SURABAYA

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 1076

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, ID,

SUBJECT: GOI RESPONSE TO MERDEKA ATTACKS

REF: JAKARTA 1006 DTG 2309101Z JAN 76, JAKARTA 0923 DTG 229550Z JAN76

BEGIN SUMMARY: GOI THROUGH KOPKAMTIB CHIEF OF STAFF
ADMIRAL SUDOMO JAN. 24 CRITICIZED DIAH ARTICLES,
ANNOUNCED THAT MERDEKA HAD BEEN "WARNED" FOR PRINTING
THEM, AND SIMULTANEOUSLY CALLED INCIDENT CLOSED.
UNCERTAIN IF DIAH SIGNIFICANTLY SOBERED BY PUBLIC
RAP ON KNUCKLES, OR THAT DISCUSSION OF ARTICLES AND
ASSOCIATED DIAH-MALIK FEUD WILL END IMMEDIATELY, BUT
SUDOMO STATEMENT (WHICH CLEARLY MADE WITH SUHARTO'S
BLESSING) LIKELY AT MINIMUM TO TONE DOWN ANY FURTHER
EXCHANGES. END SUMMARY. END CONFIDENTIAL
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1. AUTHORITATIVE GOI RESPONSE TO RECENT ARTICLES BY MERDEKA EDITOR B.M. DIAH CRITICIZING GOI FOREIGN POLICY CAME IN STATEMENT TO PRESS BY KOPKAMTIB CHIEF OF STAFF SUDOMO JAN. 24 IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING TWO-HOUR MEETING BETWEEN SUDOMO AND PRESIDENT SUHARTO. CITING OFT-REPEATED GOI POSITION THAT PRESS SHOULD AVOID INFLAMMATORY OR SENSATIONAL ARTICLES WHICH MIGHT DISTURB NATIONAL STABILITY, SUDOMO SAID HE HAD "STERNLY WARNED" MERDEKA FOR PRINTING THE ARTICLES, THAT DIAH HAD "APOLOGIZED" TO HIM FOR ARTICLES AND HAD CLAIMED THEY HAD NO POLITICAL PURPOSE, BUT THAT IT WAS TOO EARLY TO TELL WHETHER THERE WERE "OTHER FORCES" BEHIND DIAH AND GOI WOULD "WAIT AND SEE" IF DIAH PROFESSION OF LACK OF POLITICAL INTENT WAS TRUE. ACCORDING SOME REPORTS OF PRESS CONFERENCE (INCLUDING MERDEKA'S), SUDOMO STRONGLY SUGGESTED THAT REPETITION OF SUCH CONDUCT WOULD LEAD TO CLOSING OF MERDEKA.

2. PRIMARY COMPLAINT OVER ARTICLE CITED BY SUDOMO WAS DIAH FAILURE TO AIR HIS CRITICISMS IN ADVANCE WITH GOI LEADERS CONCERNED IN ORDER TO HAVE ALL RELEVANT FACTS AND CLEAR EXPLANATION OF POLICY. RESULT WAS NON-FACTUAL, UNOBJECTIVE ARTICLE. IN LENGTHY IF NOT COMPLETELY LUCID THEORETICAL DISCUSSION, SUDOMO CLASSIFIED DIAH TECHNIQUE AS "CONTRAVENTION", WHICH HE DEFINED AS FALLING BETWEEN "COMPETITION" AND "CONTROVERSY" AND AS BEING CHARACTERIZED BY A "CONCEALED MENTAL ATTITUDE" TOWARDS A CERTAIN PERSON OR GROUP WHICH COULD EASILY BE TRANSFORMED INTO HATRED AND WHICH HAD NOT PLACE IN INDONESIAN "PANCASILA DEMOCRACY."

3. SUDOMO CONFIRMED HE HAD MET WITH DIAH JAN. 21 TO DISCUSS ARTICLES, AND WOULD HAVE FOLLOW-UP MEETING WITH DIAH AND MALIK IN NEAR FUTURE (SECOND REFTEL). HE SAID PROBLEM OF ARTICLES NOW RESOLVED, AND THEREFORE PUBLIC NEED NO LONGER DISCUSS THE MATTER.

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4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH ALMOST ANY OTHER JAKARTA NEWSPAPER WHICH PRINTED COMMENTARY ON GOI POLICY AS CRITICAL AS DIAH PIECES WOULD PROBABLY HAVE BEEN CLOSED DOWN IMMEDIATELY, SUDOMO STATEMENT NEVERTHELESS REPRESENTS SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC RAP ON KNUCKLES FOR DIAH. WHETHER SUDOMO'S OBVIOUS THREAT THAT DIAH'S HITHERTO PRIVILEGED

STATUS IN JAKARTA JOURNALISTIC WORLD MAY NOT PROTECT MERDEKA IF ATTACKS CONTINUE WILL HAVE MARKED EFFECT ON THE FLAMBOYANT PUBLISHER REMAINS TO BE SEEN. MERDEKA EDITORIAL PAGE JAN. 24 VIRTUALLY FILLED WITH LAUDATORY LETTERS ON DIAH SERIES PLUS EDITORIAL DEFENDING PRESS CRITICISM, AND JAN 26 MERDEKA UNABASHEDLY FRONTPAGED ALMOST VERBATIM ACCOUNT OF SUDOMO PRESS CONFERENCE AND GAVE ADJACENT HEADLINE TREATMENT TO CALL FOR PRESS FREEDOM CONTAINED (AMONG NUMEROUS OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS) IN CONCLUDING STATEMENT OF A CONFERENCE OF STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS. ALSO NOT CLEAR THAT DIAH-MALIK FEUD OR DISCUSSIONS OF DIAH CRITICISM WILL END AS PROMPTLY AS SUGGESTED BY SUDOMO. MERDEKA APPEARED MORE THAN WILLING TO KEEP FEUD ALIVE JAN. 26 BY PUBLISHING MALIK REMARK FOLLOWING SUDOMO PRESS CONFERENCE THAT IF DIAH REALLY WISHED TO APOLOGIZE HE SHOULD DO SO IN PRINT IN MERDEKA. AND ARMY-BACKED ORGANS ANGKATAN BERSENJATA AND BERITA BUANA JAN. 26 RESPECTIVELY CONTRIBUTED TO SUBSTANTIVE COLLOQUY WITH COLUMN DEFENDING CURRENT GOI FOREIGN POLICY AS VS. "PRO-SOCIALIST" OLD ORDER POLICY, AND EDITORIAL ECHO OF GOI OFFICIALS' CALLS FOR "RESPONSIBLE" PRESS CRITICISM. NEVERTHELESS, SUDOMO STATEMENT CLEARLY INDICATES GOI (INCLUDING SUHARTO) WANTS THIS EPISODE BROUGHT TO A CLOSE, AND EXCHANGES LIKELY TO BE TONED DOWN CONSIDERABLY IF NOT END COMPLETELY OVER NEXT FEW DAYS.

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